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Worship and Social Action
Herman F. Reissig

Social Action

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Editorial

Who Are Our Readers?

Mr. David Gibbons' account of the recent study of the "readership" of this magazine raises—or does it settle?—some basic questions. Probably none of us is surprised to learn that our subscribers are very largely people who occupy positions of leadership in the church. We are not reaching "the man in the last pew," or at least not very many of him. If this is not as it should be we should know it and move to do something about it.

But where did the idea come from that a magazine devoted so largely to social analysis and interpretation ought to, or could, reach the "average" church member? The "Workshop" itself, our most practical and down-to-earth feature, is designed to assist social action leaders in the local church.

At this moment the editor—and, he surmises, the Editorial Board is of the same mind—is most concerned to know how well *Social Action* is designed to give assistance to the people who, the returns show, actually are our readers. Comments on Mr. Gibbons' report are eagerly awaited.

"Arms and a Man"

Is a soldier more warlike than a diplomat? Does a uniform smother the humane instincts of

the man within? Until recently we heard a good deal about the dangerous influence of the military in our own government. The Eisenhower regime has given a different cast to the situation. Stewart Alsop has been speculating on the causes of the recent revival of "peace talk." He wrote in his column on May 8:

"It seems to be a law of nature that professional soldiers—at least ground soldiers—are cautious about political adventures and over-extended commitments (President Eisenhower and General Ridgway seem to be obeying this law here in the United States). It may be that the Red Army leaders, faced with an overstrained economy at home and risky commitments abroad, really are eager for a period of relaxation and retrenchment, perhaps even for the kind of 'you stay in your back yard and I'll stay in my back yard' arrangement that soldiers like."

If there is anything in this line of reasoning it may be a sign of hope rather than a danger signal that the recent promotion list of Red Army generals had no "political" or "party" generals at all. Every one of them, Mr. Alsop notes, had a solid war record.

The D.A.R. at Bay

There is something pathetic in the actions taken by the Daughters of the American Revo-

lution at their recent meeting in Washington concerning the United Nations and UNESCO. Indeed, tragic is not too strong a word to apply to the moral isolation which this group has incurred in its efforts to conserve a great national tradition. The *New York Times* put the matter with startling frankness in an editorial: The Daughters are "good and patriotic ladies" who "never get together without displaying an amount and degree of antediluvian prejudice that, even after many seasons, astounds the thoughtful observer."

Among other things, they passed, the editorial continues, "by what sounded like acclamation, a resolution stating that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is 'patterned exactly after the Communist teaching of Soviet Russia.' They would not listen to a speaker who urged that the D.A.R. send 'accredited observers' to see what the U.N. was really up to. It seemed better, as another speaker put it, not to 'undignify' the D.A.R. by examining the facts in this—or perhaps any other—situation. The second speaker was applauded when she proposed instead that the ladies 'go after them with clubs, like our forefathers.'"

The *Times* found this amusing. It has that aspect, to be sure, but it seems to us very sad. It shows how dangerously near to the surface our irrational phobias, our animosities, and our vanity really are.

Christian Vocation and Public Welfare

Interesting light was thrown on Christian service in Britain's welfare state in an article by Roger Lloyd in the *Manchester Guardian* some weeks ago. It seems that in two "South Country dioceses" the bishops have designated a dozen of the younger clergy to study the social services maintained by the government—health, pensions, public assistance, child care, and the like. The administrators have responded eagerly, "obviously anxious to get from the church every ounce of informed cooperation she can give." Concerning these bureaucratic officials the writer says: "These administrators have no doubts about how the laity of the Church can come into the heart of the Welfare State or that, being practising Christians, they can give to it what it must always need, and make of it a very important instrument for the Kingdom of God."

The theory is that if these Christian social workers "have been brought up from babyhood in a church they should be so imbued by their sense of the absolute sanctity of the individual personality that their mere presence in 'fieldwork,' as it is called, is the best possible insurance against the inevitable dangers of large-scale administration."

However, the writer adds: "If they know their Christian doctrine at all, they should be auto-

matically on their guard against the dangers of administrative impersonality, and of thinking of human beings as sets of statistical averages. Many young Christians are coming into this work now. There should be more and more. It is today one of the most important of all vocations."

An Ugly Spectacle

The violence that has broken out in labor strikes at Southern Bell Telephone, Sperry Gyroscope, and on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad has shocked the country. *Business Week*, April 30, suggests a reason. Since the war, it is explained, there has been a tendency in large-scale industry to close plants when strikes are called. The strikes here referred to present a contrast. "The one thing these disputes have in common is that management has determinedly sought to operate the properties despite picket lines."

Business Week notes that absence of violence in strikes has given rise to the notion that strikes are more civilized than formerly. "But the bloodshed and property destruction reported from Birmingham, Long Island, and along the route of the L & N serve as a tragic reminder that when a strike is resisted, as management has every right to do, the amenities of civilized life go up in smoke."

That is one view. A letter we have received from John G. Ramsay, well-known Christian labor leader in the CIO, protests as

grossly unjust the attempt to fasten all the blame on the union for what has happened to Southern Bell Telephone property. Joseph A. Bierne, president of the Communications Workers of America, CIO, also an active Christian labor leader, disclaims, for his union, responsibility for the violent acts committed and complains that the company has steadily refused the union's offer to "arbitrate all disputed items"—an offer made before the strike began.

Worship and Action

Our leading article in this issue is an invitation to think. There is strong meat in it for those who are accustomed to do their religious thinking in exclusively individual terms—especially for any who may have been influenced by current efforts to rob Christianity of one of its major elements; namely, the corporate spiritual community. Historically, the vitality of Christianity has been due in great part to the corporate fellowship which is the core of the Christian Church. It may well be contended that the social vacuum created by an excess of individualism in the West has been largely responsible for Communist infiltration, especially in intellectual and cultural circles. There is no stable basis for Christian social action apart from the spiritual solidarity expressed in corporate worship—and superlatively in the Lord's Supper.

Indian Americans and the 84th Congress

With chairmen in both the House and Senate Committees favorable to the point of view of Indian American leaders, no disturbing legislation has been passed as yet by the present Congress. Some positive bills have been introduced. One of these, S. 746, would restore to the Three Affiliated Tribes of Ft. Berthold at a fair purchase price all mineral interests in "the taking area" surrounding the lake. This proposal is supported by the Tribal Business Council. Other Indian groups farther downstream on the Missouri River were granted these rights and hence this bill should receive endorsement from those of us who are concerned about justice for these displaced people.

A "termination" proposal for the Three Affiliated Tribes was being considered until recently but has now been shelved due to representations made by the Tribal Council and strongly supported by the Agency Superintendent and by the Regional Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This postponement will give an interval for settling down after the radical uprooting of so many people here. One finds considerable resentment against white people, engendered by the disruption caused by the Garrison Dam developments. Also there is a revival of the use of peyote, a practice that had disappeared on this reservation. Peyote is a drug which, along

with alcohol, operates as a way of escape from the pressures of readjustment.

Meanwhile the Board of Home Missions is moving to strengthen its total program for North Dakota Indians by bringing a well-trained rural minister, the Rev. Ralph Galts, to serve as the pastor of one of our Ft. Berthold churches. The Rev. Austin Engels, pastor of the new Congregational Community Church in New Town, has won support from Indian and white residents in this town where the Indian Agency is located. He has been selected chairman of a Council which consists of five Congregational pastors and a lay representative from each of our seven congregations.

The Rev. Harold W. Case is shortly to give full-time as director of a North Dakota Community Relations Ministry. His assignment will include efforts in behalf of Indians of the four North Dakota Indian Reservations in terms of legislation and governmental administration and adjustments to community life on the part of Indians who have moved away from the reservations. This new type of Christian social action will be carried out on a wholly non-sectarian and a fully cooperative basis. It will make a significant contribution to improved intergroup relations.

—GALEN R. WEAVER

Worship and Social Action



By Herman F. Reissig

International Relations Secretary,
Council for Social Action

A MEETING of social action leaders, held in New York a few years ago, opened with a hymn, a reading from the Bible, a period of silence, and a spoken prayer. One member of the group, with little or no previous experience in such meetings, was moved to comment. "You know," he said, "some people in our churches would be surprised to hear that in a meeting on social action we sang 'The Church's One Foundation,' prayed together, and listened to a passage from the Bible."

The remark was more than surprising to the one who led the worship; it left him incredulous and astonished. Could it be true that some Christians have never associated social action with worship? The man who made the comment was sure of it.

It is probably no exaggeration to say that in the minds of not a few church members social action is so little understood that worship—which they think of as deeply spiritual—is not thought to have anything to do with it. It is certainly no exaggeration to say that many Christians who apply themselves with zeal to social issues find "materials" for relevant worship only in the hymns, Scripture passages, and prayers that deal directly and obviously with peace, justice, brotherhood, and action. "Rise Up, O Men of God!", "Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life," "At Length There Dawns the Glorious Day"—hymns to sing if it's a better social order you're talking about! The parable of the Last Judgment, Amos' denunciation of solemn assemblies, Isaiah's vision of swords beaten into ploughshares—scripture passages to be read when the sermon deals with a social problem!

It was such observations, among others, that were in the

minds of members of the Editorial Board when they decided an issue of this magazine should explore "Worship and Social Action." But, beyond such considerations, there is much more that seems to ask for discussion of this subject.

The relation of the Christian faith, of the church, and of individual Christians to social questions is still the subject of much groping inquiry. If some understand it better than others, it must be said that all of us are looking for more light. Error is not confined to those Christians whose stress on the "spiritual" character of their faith makes them uncomfortable in the presence of attempts to relate it in any direct fashion to specific and current social issues. Christians who want the church to "speak out, take a stand" on economic, political, and racial questions may not always clearly apprehend the real nature of the Gospel and the true function of the church. What we call "the Christian approach," or "the Christian answer," is not as easily discovered as those who strongly believe in social action sometimes suppose. No wonder, then, that we question, experiment, and grope in our effort to bring social action into our worship!

Scarcely anyone, on the other hand, needs to be reminded that the whole subject of worship is being searchingly re-examined. From experiments with new liturgical forms in our churches to learned essays by specialists,

to the publication every year of scores of new "devotional" books, there is enough evidence that we are trying hard to find ways of worship that are at once true to the historic faith and relevant to our needs. This article will, the writer hopes, be a contribution, if only a modest one, to a more real worship and a more effective social action.

Definitions

What do we do when we worship? What happens? True worship is not, to begin with, a subjective activity in which we concentrate, in the presence of God, on our moods and needs. The psychologist may encourage his patient to think and talk about himself but that is not the purpose of worship. Worship is, centrally and first of all, the turning of the mind toward God. It is the contemplation of God—his greatness, holiness, mercy. It is the celebration of what God is and has done for men. In worship we begin by looking, not at ourselves but at God, going on then to look at our human lives and at our world with minds filled with the awe and gratitude, the fear and the love which fill the mind that looks at God.

Much of our worship never reaches the level of real worship because it is too subjective—starts with and concentrates too much on our own lives and on the world around us. It does not begin by seeing the Lord, "high and lifted up"; it begins by thinking, or talking, or singing about

what we are, how we feel, what we want. Instead of the mind being directed toward God's gift of Christ it is trained on ourselves. But worship, in its very essence and by definition, means putting in the forefront not the worshiper but the one who is worshiped. Even if our main thoughts and words are about others, rather than about ourselves, the defect is the same. The subject displaces the object.

Worship, then, is the contemplation and celebration of God—his being, his work, his salvation. What consequences flow from this are a by-product. And the consequences will take care of themselves if we truly worship the true God.

What is social action? "Christian social action," said the members of the C.S.A. La Foret institute, "is the cooperative effort of Christians to discover and apply the will of God to the social problems of the day." There are other good ways to say it but this definition is about as close as you can get in one short sentence. And it puts the emphasis where it is in worship, on God and his will. How inevitable, then, that social action should take its start and find its central direction and motivation in worship! For Christian social action gives its attention, not in the first place to some ideal, or possible, "solution" of a social problem, and not to some social order described in editorial, speech, or textbook—capitalism, free enterprise, mixed economy, welfare state, de-

mocracy, socialism, communism—but to God and his will for us, as revealed in Israel, in Christ and in the church.

To be sure, the God to whom we lift up our minds and hearts in worship cannot be seen and understood merely by the spontaneous action of an uninformed and undisciplined imagination; the worshiper requires the historian, the theologian, the philosopher, the psychologist, the scientist, the Biblical scholar, the artist. Social action, in like manner, must use research, investigation, analysis. But in the act of worship we neither sift and weigh our theology nor analyze our social problems. We worship the God we know—as we know him. And we set before his greatness, holiness, and mercy the well-known facts and problems of our human life, lived in community.

Our Basic Needs

There are two main ways to make clear to ourselves the relation of worship to social action. We can look at our attitudes and work in social relations and ask, "What do we, at the most fundamental level, need if we are to have both the will to act and the wisdom to act wisely?" Or, we can look at God and ask, "What, if we worship him as he has been revealed to us, will be the effect on our minds and wills?" Let us look at some answers to the first question.

Is not the *will* to act our pri-

many need and lack? Leaders in social action know they can usually count on one question being put in almost any group of interested people: "What can we do to overcome indifference and complacency?" The inquirer often says, "So many people just don't seem to care." True enough! And it should be added that few of us care as much as we should. (Those who moan about the indifference of others have to be careful. They may fall into the error of the Pharisee: "God I thank thee that I am not as so many others: complacent, indifferent, loving their comfort too much to want to be disturbed by human needs.")

Setting forth the facts of hunger, injustice, sickness often helps to arouse the will to do something, especially if we use some imagination and skill in presenting the need—and if we, ourselves, see the facts in terms of living men, women, and children. But where men believe in God our first and most powerful resource for stimulating the will is to take long, frequent, honest looks at him. Consider thy God, O man! Consider his holiness and tremble! Consider his measureless self-giving in Christ and be thankful! Consider your utter dependence upon him and renounce your pride. Think of the love that endured the worst men could do, asking nothing for himself but only that the children of God might have life and have it abundantly! Will a man or a woman who, again and

again, has looked at God in the face of Christ still go his self-centered way, caring little that his fellowmen beg for a chance to live? Well yes, some will. God doesn't have too much success with any of us and almost none at all, so far as human eyes can see, with some of us. Nevertheless, lethargy and indifference and the negative spirit need, first of all, to be brought into the presence of God. If we want to stir up the wills of our people our search should not be primarily for some new educational gadgets but, first, for a greater personal awareness of God and, second, for more insight and skill in leading people into his presence through worship.

What else do we need for Christian action on social problems? Grateful hearts, for one thing; and then daily repentance for the poor use we have made of our lives. The old-time evangelistic meeting had many faults. Too emotional, too superficial, too narrow in its interpretation of the Christian life! Easy to make up an indictment of the older evangelistic methods! But many were changed and remained changed. So modern-minded a Christian as Harry Emerson Fosdick asserts with some vigor that he can name the place and the hour of his conversion. "Yes, sir!" he says, "Real, old-fashioned conversion!" What caused so many in evangelistic meetings to do an about-face? Study what was said in the sermons, hymns, prayers and you

observe two main emphases. First, the emphasis on the goodness of God—all that he, out of love, has done for you and me. (Sometimes much was said about the goodness of “mother”—her tireless work and her long-suffering love. Terribly sentimental, it often was, but, the goodness of God or the goodness of one’s mother, the idea was the same. See how much has been done for you and how much you are loved!) So, the evangelist melted ice in the heart and stirred up a warmth of gratitude.

Next came another kind of summons. “Now look at your life! See what a wretched mess you have made of it!” The sins were enumerated, in detail and with vivid illustration. O, the contrast between the goodness and the gifts, and the use made of them! In many a man and woman new life was born. For where gratitude and repentance meet and fuse conversion occurs. (We might add the suggestion that conversions with little more than the fear of hell behind them were much less likely to stick.)

If we ask why we sink so easily into cold indifference—turn deaf ears to pleas for our help—is it not clear that this is partly because there is little lively gratitude in our hearts? Driving down the boulevard into Los Angeles some years ago, the man at the wheel waved his hand toward the great bridges, buildings, boulevards and exclaimed to his visitor from New York, “See what man hath wrought!” This is all too

typical of the American mind. *Our* virtue and our work have gotten us this victory! Grateful to God? Well, yes, in a vague and mostly verbal sort of way. But, the deep bow is to ourselves. Out of pride in human achievements comes no spirit of dedication. And if we have no deep and vivid awareness of being the recipients of unearned mercies, what is there to repent of? The prayer of thanksgiving — “Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving kindness to us and to all men . . .”—and the prayer of repentance—“We have offended against thy holy laws”—are at the heart of all true worship. Hearts that are grateful and contrite will be open to the call for help from the neglected and the oppressed.

But if we are to take up arms against social conditions that stand athwart human development we need also hope and courage. “To travel hopefully,” said Robert Louis Stevenson, “is better than to arrive and the true success is to labour.” A brave sentiment! But we shall not keep pushing on toward social conditions more favorable to personality unless we travel with hope; and labor needs some assurance of arrival.

The Evanston meeting of the World Council of Churches wrestled with the problem of hope. What is the Christian hope? What is its source?

"No hope at all in man and in human achievement!" said some. Others said, "But God is in this temporal world and our little human efforts are not unrelated to the final victory over sin and death, which only God can bring to pass." American Christians, in particular—so confident in human strength and intelligence!—need to feel the full impact of that view of man and of this world that finds hope only in the action of a power not our own. Our work for "a better world" is often superficial precisely because we have not taken the measure of human limitations and human sin.

It is not too much to say that we are not prepared for *Christian* social action until we are so overwhelmed by man's inability to save himself, in life and in death, that we accept, with shaken hearts, the statement of Jesus: "Apart from me you can do *nothing*." (John 15.5) For the peril of pessimism is not greater than the peril of the optimism (self-confidence) which leads us into many kinds of foolishness because we do not know our radical weakness and sin. With Wordsworth, we often say, "The world is too much with us." Change one word and you have another statement of fact: The world is too much *for* us. The sin of man is too deep and pervasive, the problems of human existence too profound and complicated for human intelligence and human strength. And who has a cure for the death that fin-

ally overtakes us all? More than that, there is no way of putting into human life an underlying significance unless something beyond ourselves puts it there. The radical threat to sustained social action is meaninglessness. And man cannot by optimistic assertions or by strenuous activity give his life a final meaning.

Our little successes as we struggle for justice and peace help to keep us going, and if they are little they are not unrelated to the final victory, which only God can bring about. But the kind of hope and courage we must have if we are never to quit, no matter how small the gains or how tragic the reverses, must be born, "not of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

How necessary, then, that we put ourselves consciously and often in the presence of the God who is "our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble" and who makes us unafraid though the earth should change, though the mountains tremble! If in worship, private or public, we contemplate the victory that God can bring out of a lonely death on a cross we may be sustained in our work through even the darkest hours.

The Fruits of Worship

We can take ourselves a little further in this exploration by using the second of the two approaches mentioned earlier. What, if we worship God as He has revealed himself to us, will

be the effect on our minds and wills? We shall, as one consequence, be less liable to the self-righteousness which is one of the first temptations of those who try to change the world. Thinking of ourselves and our opinions more highly than we ought to think is such a strong and universal tendency because we ought, and need, to think highly of ourselves. The assertion of the self is our answer to the facts of life which are always suggesting to us that we weigh little or nothing in the scale of the universe. The universe's bigness and our obvious littleness, the tiny figure any one of us cuts in contemporary life and in human history insinuate into our consciousness the idea that we are pathetic and futile beings. But this we cannot endure. So we overdo the protest and even our defense of the good becomes, in part, a prideful self-assertion. If sins are serpents, this is the most wily and subtle of them all, leading us, as the saints have discovered, to be proud even of our humility.

When we fight against injustice and other social evils we are under greater temptation to think too well of ourselves than are people who make no particular effort to do good. For we do good partly because doing good makes us feel good. So, we become more and more sure of our rightness and, correspondingly, intolerant, or even contemptuous toward those who disagree with us. Hence the frequent disclaimer: "I'm no do-gooder."

Certainly there can be nothing wrong with doing good! It is the attendant self-righteousness that is offensive.

The surest cure for this "occupational disease" is in worship. Bring that opinion (insight, knowledge), which on the horizontal plane looks so praiseworthy, before the great God! O, poor little man! Before the great God you will scarcely feel like congratulating yourself! If we often and truly put ourselves in the presence of God we may even approach the high grace of being firm and resolute and, at the same time, teachable, tolerant, and humble.

From worship flow many other consequences. Easily we can be weakened by discouragement if we look too much at ourselves and at our fellowmen. To hear the old words, "He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth," helps to straighten the sagging backbone. To sing

"O God, the Rock of Ages
Who evermore hast been,
What time the tempest rages,
Our dwelling place serene,
Before thy first creations,
O Lord, the same as now,
To endless generations,
The everlasting thou"

—that pulls the lagging human life into step with its unchanging and eternal Partner. In worship we may even substitute the spirit of joy for the fairly grim kind of hanging on, the lustreless devotion to duty to which we are

often reduced. The hymnals carry the spirit we need:

Lead On, O King Eternal
Now Thank We All Our God
O Come, All Ye Faithful
Joy to the World! the Lord Is Come
All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name
All People That on Earth Do Dwell

And it would be hard to think of a more powerful tonic for those who wrestle with baffling social problems than standing in the congregation to hear once more the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's "The Messiah"—

King of Kings and Lord of Lords!
And He shall reign forever and
ever!

It is true, my soul! It must be true! Though the nations rage and the people imagine a vain thing, He shall reign!

Prayer and Social Action

Having considered some of the broad underlying aspects of our subject, let us move on to more specific suggestions.

The spoken prayer is a central part of almost all worship. Let us see what can be said about it to make it more meaningful for social action. The prayers in the collection, "For God and the People—Prayers of the Social Awakening" by Walter Rauschenbusch, are still widely used and for at least three reasons they still stand as "social action prayers" *par excellence*. First, they are the prayers of a Christian mystic. Second, they lift before God specific situations, specific persons and groups. Third, avoid-

ing both the over-smooth and over-worked phrase and, on the other hand, the graceless, abrupt, or awkward word, they wake up the mind without jarring it. This, one feels as he uses these prayers, is the way we ought to talk to God about our social relations and needs.

In addition to their value in actual use and as examples, the Rauschenbusch prayers are endlessly instructive for what they teach us about the relation of social action to personal faith. For here, in Walter Rauschenbusch, was such a combination of personal, spiritual devotion and blazing social passion that to draw a line between them is to try to separate the inseparable. This man stood in awe before God, and for God's gifts in history and in nature he was profoundly grateful. Before the cross of Christ his heart worshiped and cried out in repentance. No wonder, then, that his anger against injustice was hot and his zeal for a better social order unflagging!

If we had no other evidence that the average Christian leader in the United States is a hurried person who spends little time in quiet solitude our prayers would tell the story. From committee meetings we may get information and plans for action but the profound response of the mind described by Charles Wesley as "lost in wonder, love and praise" is not induced by feverish activity. And a heart made truly "humble and contrite" by the awful

contrast between life as it is and life as it could be is not the product of a brief and superficial "period of devotion."

Does anyone think Rauchenbusch "dashed off" those prayers that so lift our spirits and so move us to action? Or that, however he may have written them, they did not grow out of hours of brooding silence? Better, one sometimes thinks, not to pray at all in our social action meetings than to do it so superficially that it amounts to little more than a verbal bow in the direction of the Almighty! The mind is not waked up, the heart is not stirred, the will feels no access of energy. "Worship," we call it! But a hymn, a bit of Scripture and a "Let-us-pray" may leave us as far from worship as a quick, mechanical smile is from genuine friendliness.

Christian social action needs a long quiet look at the greatness and holiness of God, the compassion and love of Christ, the beauty around us, the faces of happy children, and, in contrast, the misery of so much human life and the ugliness of sin. If not all of us can be mystics, all of us can find the time to use the "postern gate" that Rauschenbusch described.

In the castle of my soul
Is a little postern gate,
Whereat, when I enter,
I am in the presence of God.
In a moment, in the turning
of a thought,
I am where God is.
This is a fact.

But in Rauschenbusch the prayers are not only "for God," they are also for "the people"—and for quite specific persons and groups. He prays "for children who work," "for working men," "for employers," "for artists and musicians," "for writers and newspaper men," "for teachers," "for all true lovers"—a special prayer for each group. He does not hesitate to leave the general and to bring the singular and concrete before the Judgment Throne and the Mercy Seat. *And each of these prayers shows that the man praying understands and has thought about the special needs and temptations of the men and women in the group.*

Much of our praying is too abstract; it does not focus the mind on anything or anyone in particular. The minds in the bowed heads wander or fall half-asleep, not only because the phrases have been heard so many times but because there is nothing concrete enough to make it possible to think about it. If, in a ministers' meeting, the leader prays, "If ever we [ministers] have been more concerned for the strong and the rich than for the shepherdless throngs of people for whom thy soul grieved, we pray thee to forgive," it is fairly certain that the minds of the ministers present will come to attention and there will be some heart-searching. The businessman is likely to do more than just listen with half an ear when someone prays, "We acknowledge before thee our common

guilt for the hardness and deceitfulness of industry and trade which lead us all into temptation and cause even the righteous to slip and fall."

But such praying — whether done in private or in public, but especially if in public—requires, first, concentrated *thinking* about real people and their problems and, second, an understanding and compassionate heart, lest the prayer be an admonition addressed to men, rather than a prayer to God. "O God, we pray for our brothers and sisters in Russia" is a good supplement to the prayer "for all men everywhere," but if we have thought long and quietly about the Russians and about our relationship to them, we might be a little more specific. (For example: ". . . our brothers and sisters in Russia, under special temptation to fear man more than God and to put too much trust in human achievements.") The people of India are more than just "people of India": they are now in a special, contemporary situation, and some aspects of it might well be lifted before God in prayer.

A prayer should, no doubt, take us "out of this world," lift us up above the clutter of the contemporary and the concrete. But before you can lift a person you have to get hold of him—the real person, where he lives—and much of our praying is so abstract and general that it seems not to involve anybody in particular. One hesitates to say that

the prayer, "O God, give peace to our troubled world," is without value. Yet the fact is that God cannot give us peace until we do something about some quite specific situations and attitudes. It might be well, in our prayers, to mention some of them. If we find it hard to keep our minds from wandering while the abstract, conventional phrases flow out over us, one wonders if God doesn't tire of them, too.

Rauschenbusch had, also, the poet's instinct for the right word. You and I may not have it but if the high task of leading in worship is sometimes given to us we should, at least, remember that there is a "language of prayer." In this writer's opinion no religious leader of our time has succeeded better than Harry Emerson Fosdick in steering between the conventional, over-used words of prayer and, on the other hand, the speech of everyday life which, in prayer, may jar and annoy the mind, instead of lifting it. His pulpit prayers have much of the quality of poetry—the grace and lift and rhythm of it. But down to earth, too! God listens more to our hearts than to our words but the people whom we lead in prayer are strongly influenced by words—and some words, quite acceptable in other places, are not good vehicles of prayer. Some of us, if we are invited to ask God to "help us *implement* the decisions made here today" are tempted to murmur, "O Lord, not *that!*"

The worker in social action has a special problem here, for he deals with very concrete, every-day matters. Racial integration, for example. But, while we certainly ought to bring our racial attitudes and practices before God, one doubts the appropriateness of asking the Lord to help us "integrate" our schools and churches. ("Integrate" is a cold, technical word.) Economic practices, international trade, civil liberties are not easily brought into our prayers. The words of the classroom and the discussion group have a dissonant sound before the altar. Yet these are matters of real and vital concern to us and it will not do to scoff at the idea of praying about them.

Let the leader of worship saturate himself with the mood and language of prayer, from the Book of Psalms to Rauschenbusch, Fosdick, W. E. Orchard, Joseph Fort Newton, James Myers, Georgia Harkness, John Baillie. And then let him meditate long on the current social problem, until, without retreating into the merely traditional phrase or the pious generality, he succeeds in sifting out the heart of the matter, clothing it in words that are both concrete and spiritual. Let the mystic and the poet brood over the world of the economist, the politician, the sociologist, until their realities are clothed in the garments of praise and petition!

Worship and Theology

Centrally important in the relation of social action to worship is our fundamental interpretation of the Christian faith, that is to say, our theology. Much modern Christianity presents us with an amiable and essentially little God and, on the other side, a human being who can get along quite well, thank-you, if only God will be available and cooperative when we want him. Christian social action springs from faith in a great and righteous God before whom the nations are "as a drop in the bucket," and men are, without exception, sinners in need of God's forgiveness and grace. From this great God the vertical lines of judgment run down to test all societies and social orders, all political parties, governments and economic practices.

By what standards do Christians judge social practices? Often the sole test seems to be conformity with the views of a national hero (Washington, for example), or with the American "way of life." Is the practice patriotic or unpatriotic, American or un-American, conservative or radical? Is it individualism or socialism? The appeal is not to the God of the Hebrew prophets, "setting a plumb line" in the midst of human systems. The criterion is not the God of the New Testament, revealing on the cross both his seeking love and man's deep perversity. Could we measure proposals and prac-

tices by such temporal and human standards if our worship brought us into the presence of a great and living God? It is well to try to "improve our worship" by paying attention to psychological and artistic principles. It is more important to see to it that the order of worship grows out of and reflects the profundity and honesty of the Christian faith.

What is wrong with talking about who may or may not be permitted to "join our church"? Is it not an inadequate conception, or doctrine, of the church? The church is not "our" church, save in the minds of those for whom it is only another club—with religious overtones. It is the church of the living God. It is the Church of Christ. And who are we, ourselves guests at His table, to say that some of God's children may not sit with us? Let this fact about the church be made explicit in prayer and sermon, in symbol and in song, and we shall have a powerful resource for getting rid of our presumptuous exclusions.

Social Action and the Holy Communion

Especially in England—and there particularly among the Anglicans—there is growing appreciation of the sacrament of the Holy Communion (Eucharist) as a source of the faith and insight we need for Christian social action. The sacrament embodies, as one of their leaders says, "the essential Gospel mes-

sage, that God is always giving himself in the ordinary things of everyday life and in life's common experiences." The Lord's Supper is, in truth, a profound and dramatic expression of that Christian interpretation of life which sends us, as Christians, into economic problems, politics, housing, recreation, agriculture. For all the "unearthly" atmosphere in which the sacrament moves, it is astonishingly "earthly." And this is precisely the genius of the Christian faith—in contrast, let us say, to Buddhism—that it does not reject or demean the ordinary stuff of life, things as ordinary as food and drink; it accepts them as part of God's creation and it interpenetrates the material and temporal with the spiritual and eternal. If bread can be (or signify) the body of Christ, a farm or a place of business can be his dwelling place.

The real miracle in the sacrament is not the transubstantiation of this particular bread and wine but its witness to the perpetual possibility of transfusing our everyday life with divine meaning. The highest can enter into the lowliest. The bread and wine "which we here offer unto thee" tell us that everything we have and do—money, work, play, government, law, medicine, can be brought to the altar. This is wonderful! And how completely the sacrament disposes of the notion that politics and economics and other "materialistic" things have nothing to do with reli-

gion! It overcomes the separation of the spiritual and the material. It is the final liturgical testimony to the oneness and wholeness of life as revealed in Christ.

These truths about the Lord's Supper we must teach—and then see to it that the liturgical forms we use in its observance convey to the Supper guests its real meaning. If we do this we may not, during the communion service, discuss specific economic or political problems but we shall know that we must, as Christians, deal with them because this sacrament proves that the common things of life have sacramental possibilities.

Worship and Human Togetherness

If we ask why people go to church — meaning participation in public worship — one of the answers must surely be that worship helps to satisfy their need of fellowship or togetherness. Probably no hymn is sung with more feeling than "Blest Be the Tie That Binds." This is significant. Despite all our praise of individualism and independence, we long to feel deeply united with our fellowmen. A sense of "community" is not something alien that the church imports from a more ideal world and tries to introduce to reluctant consumers. The situation is, rather, that modern conditions and philosophies have fostered an apartness of the person from the social body that is true neither

to the objective facts of life nor to our felt needs.

In secular life, individualism, independence, and self-reliance have been necessary reactions to the smothering of the individual in feudal and totalitarian orders. In Protestantism, the emphasis on personal faith, direct personal access to God and personal responsibility have been a reaction to a clerical, hierarchical system in which a personal, spiritual, and vital religion was all but dissipated. But for a long time now we Protestants have emphasized the separateness of the person until his aloneness is a threat both to his spiritual health and to the well-being of his societies. Many are afraid of the very word "social." As if we were not in our very essence social beings! As if there could be a person or a religion without social relationships and social responsibilities!

And, because the attempted isolation of the individual from the social body is so false to the facts of life, the corporate worship in which we are, before God, deeply united gives us a kind of nameless joy. When it is true to its real character, the church is the expression and the teacher of community, or the togetherness of men with each other under God. The church is not an aggregation of individuals but a community, a social body. And it is in the church's worship that we most deeply express and learn to feel our togetherness. In corporate worship the "I" is present but only as one part of the living

whole. Thus it is public worship that most powerfully creates the sense of common need and common responsibility which must underlie *social action*.

When we come to our more flagrant segregations — our splitting-up into classes, races, nationalities—however they may seem to us out in the world, in corporate worship they simply do not fit at all. Many of us must have felt a special moving of our hearts in an interdenominational and interracial service of worship. From the customary church service, where most of the worshipers come from the same denominational, cultural, national, economic, and racial background, we have gone to some special service in which we joined with men and women of different races, nationalities, cultural backgrounds and economic groupings—and we found in the service a spirit, a power, and a joy that lifted our hearts. How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! But if circumstances do not always permit the physical presence of “all sorts and conditions of men,” they will, in true worship, always in our hearts be present. Whether or not we use the hymn, Christian worship always says:

In Christ there is no East or West
In Him no South or North.

Social Action Hymns

As was suggested in the opening paragraphs of this article the relevance of a hymn to justice,

peace, or brotherhood does not always depend on its direct references to these concerns. Every good hymn is a good social action hymn. For, as we have emphasized, the foundations and resources of Christian work on social problems are not mainly in ethical precept and trumpet calls to action but principally in the cardinal facts of the Christian faith. We need the mighty faith more than precept and clarion call. It is the Christian revelation that calls for the Christian revolution. What is the use of singing “Christian, rise and act thy creed” if the creed lies dim and weak in the Christian’s mind? Here, making no attempt to do more than illustrate, are hymns that sing the Christian basis for social action:

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God
Almighty
O God, Our Help in Ages Past
The God of Abraham Praise
O God, the Rock of Ages
Now Thank We All Our God
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
All People that on Earth Do Dwell
All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross
Crown Him the Son of God
God of Our Fathers, Whose Al-
mighty Hand
Faith of Our Fathers
The Church’s One Foundation

Then, to be sure, there will be occasions when another emphasis is demanded. As for example:

In Christ There Is No East or West
Where Cross the Crowded Ways of
Life
God of Grace and God of Glory
March on, O Soul, with Strength

Rise Up, O Men of God
Lead on, O King Eternal
When Wilt Thou Save the People?

Our age is too uncertain of its faith and too bewildered by change and novelty to produce great hymns. Our "restless living" does not nourish poetry. William Pierson Merrill, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Henry Hallam Tweedy and a few others have given us some good hymns but examine any hymnal and contrast the small number of contemporary writers and hymns with the volume of great hymns written in the 19th century! We shall know that the much-talked-about revival of faith is here when the church is able, once more, to "sing unto the Lord a new song." Meanwhile, let those who have a little gift of song and some grasp of social realities see what they can do to increase the treasury.

Social Action in the Bible

The character of God, the nature of man, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection—the whole interpretation of divine and human life, as we have it in the Bible—point inescapably away from a merely private or a purely "spiritual" religion; they direct us by their inner essence to all areas of life and to all relationships and tell us to work in and through them for the glory of God and the salvation of man.

Christian social action is, therefore, not to be either justified or explained by reference to special

passages selected from here or there in the Book. It is a part of the basic "heart-action" of the Christian faith. Those parts of the Bible that point directly to acts of justice and love need, for full effect, to be interpreted in relation to the basic Christian revelation.

The following are a few examples of readings from the Bible whose relevance to social action is either implicit or explicit:

The Creation story. Gen. 1: 1-2; 3

The actual world with all its life, forms, structures, comes from God.

The summons to Moses. Ex. 3: 1-12

God, seeing the suffering of men and women, calls Moses to social leadership.

The Ten Commandments. Ex. 20: 1-17

"Social religion" from beginning to end!

Naboth's Vineyard. 1 Kings 21: 1-16

Power without moral principles.

Psalms 46

Not afraid—"though the earth do change."

The Greatness of God. Is. 40

The vanity of men and nations.

Worship without justice. Amos 4 and 5

Food for the hungry. Matt. 14: 13-21

"Give ye them to eat."

The Magnificat. Luke 1: 46-55

The scattering of the proud and the lifting up of the lowly.

Man before institutions. Luke 6: 1-11

Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus. Luke 23: 1-33

"Good people" are capable of *this*!

The Word made flesh. John 1: 1-14

God lives in a man with men—not apart from the world.

Peter's Vision. Acts 10: 1-35

"What God hath cleansed, make not thou common."

The universality of sin; justification by faith. Rom. 3: 21-28

Bound together by our sins—and by the mercy of God.

Jesus' conception of his ministry. Luke 4: 14-30; and 7: 19-23

What saith the Word of God to a rich nation existing in a world of want? The Rich Fool, Luke 12: 15-21. The Good Samaritan, Luke 10: 25-37. The Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 16: 19-31. The Last Judgment, Matt. 25: 31-46; Gal. 6: 2; Matt. 16: 26.

The self-righteousness of persons,

social classes, nations: The Pharisees and the Publican, Luke 18: 9-14; Rom. 3: 22-23.

The test of prophecy: true or false? Jeremiah 6: 14.

God's plumb line: Amos 7.

The Acts of the Apostles is a rich treasury of insight and inspiration for social action. For example: Peter's vision (10: 1-35); what the slave-girl's owners did when they "saw that their hope of gain was gone" (16: 16-24); an aspect of religion and business (19: 23-41); "We must obey God rather than men" (5: 12-32).

Book Notes

EIGHTY ADVENTUROUS YEARS.
By Sherwood Eddy. Harpers,
1955. \$3.00.

It is appropriate, in an issue of this magazine featuring an article on Worship and Social Action, to draw attention to the autobiography of a man whose life has been an extraordinary combination of evangelistic and social crusading. It is said that people sometimes learn obedience to the First Commandment through the experience of obeying the second: love of neighbor leads to love of God. With Sherwood Eddy the story is different. God has been the most authentic experience of his life: his God is "a consuming fire." As Reinhold Niebuhr says in the Introduction, "Mr. Eddy is a vivid reminder to us all that evangelical experience and social passion can be united."

One of the greatest spiritual hazards of our time is the renewal of the effort, so much in evidence a generation ago, to isolate the spiritual from the social—to suppose that we can glorify God while neglecting the *Kingdom* of God.

For all who have fallen into this fallacy the reading of this book should be a liberating experience. Mr. Eddy's early conversion was a genuine awakening and bore fruit in missionary zeal, but only when his social vision came was he a free soul.

"As truly," he writes, "as my early personal gospel had driven me to the ends of the earth with its 'woe is me if I preach not,' so now the preaching of this new whole gospel meant even greater adventure." It called for a "fight to the finish" and he "loved it." He has been called on, as St. Paul

was, to suffer for the gospel, but he has never been dismayed and at 84 is undefeated.

* * *

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE OF AMERICA. By the Educational Policies Commission, 1955. Paper bound. \$1.50.

The Commission which issued this attractive, illuminated brochure is the responsible agent of the National Education Association and the American Association of School Administrators (1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington 6, D.C.). It is a highly competent, high prestige group, and this little book presents a convincing rationale for support of the American public school system. It traces the development of the free school idea in America and outlines the philosophy of our public education system. If the account is romanticized here and there it is due to the writers' great concern to make our citizenry aware of its educational heritage and its heavy responsibility for preserving it.

The book takes account, as did an earlier volume published by the Commission — *Moral and Spiritual Values in the Public Schools*—of a widespread concern for the weaving of basic values into the educative process. The following paragraph indicates the approach:

"From its inception, the public school has concerned itself with moral and spiritual values. In so doing, it has recognized

that the school cannot alone see to the entire spiritual education of youth; it must work in active partnership with home, church, and synagogue. The genius of the public-school system, however, is that it has for a century sought to develop in children the moral and ethical commitments which are common to all of the great religions. This common basis of ethical values has both raised the level of the nation's morality and left each individual free to pursue the religious dictates of his own conscience."

* * *

JUST, RIGHT AND NECESSARY. *A Study of Reactions to the Supreme Court Decision on Segregation with a Statement of Guiding Principles, Policies and Practical Suggestions.* By the Department of Christian Social Relations of the Protestant Episcopal Church, 281 Fourth Ave., New York 10. 1955. Paper bound —25 cents.

This is an official report on the Supreme Court's decision in the school segregation cases, its background, and its visible effects throughout the country, both religious and secular, with some guides to action by which the churches and individual Christians may give full and effective support to the moral purposes embodied in the decision. It contains much useful documentary material.

"From a religious point of view," says the report, "all Chris-

tians must answer the same question the Court has answered from a legal point of view: Does racial segregation violate or limit the rights affirmed by our Christian conviction about God and Man, which convictions are writ-

ten into the political creed of the nation?" The plain facts "lead us to the conclusion that the Court's decision is just and right and necessary. We commend this conclusion to all churchmen and others."

—F. E. J.

About Our Correspondence

There is a scriptural ban on the person of whom "all men speak well." We are safely out from under condemnation on that score, since very critical letters come occasionally. But only occasionally: we are conscious chiefly of the friendly good will of those who favor us with comment. Some comments on the March issue, with its feature article on "Co-existence," are illuminating.

A very discerning reader thinks that issue "one of the best you have ever done." He senses "a feeling among our ministers that we are not doing enough to arouse the interest of our lay people in the Far Eastern situation."

An order came in for a quantity of the March issue for use in an Institute of World Affairs.

One reader, at least, was disappointed because "armed co-existence" seems an unworthy goal. Neither Mr. Loos nor Mr. Muste, she says, "mentioned the basis on which universal disarmament and peace may be attained, a higher goal than mere co-

existence." Our correspondent continues: "Universal peace with disarmament down to a police level under supervision of the U.N., as contrasted with armed co-existence with the ever present danger of war, would be an attainment worth diligent and consecrated effort. As nuclear control becomes more and more urgent will not *Social Action* join with those who strive for the strengthening of the U.N. to maintain peace under the rule of law?"

The editor of a church paper who calls himself "a faithful reader of your excellent little magazine" suggests that we should do something on the alcohol problem. We have been thinking about that. If only the calendar provided us with a month for each major problem!

The editor hopes that many readers, representing a variety of opinions and interests, will devote a half-day of vacation time to looking over recent issues of the magazine, form a considered judgment, and give it to us straight.

June 1955

WORKSHOP

Edited by
Herman F. Reissig

As most of our readers know, Prof. Hugo Thompson has, during his sabbatical leave from Macalester College, been doing part-time work with the Council for Social Action. To the deep regret of the staff and of many of our workers around the country, who have learned to love him and value his help, May 18 marked the end of this special association. Because Prof. Thompson spent

most of his time on problems of local education and organization, the editor of *Workshop* felt that a preliminary report on his work would be most appropriate in this issue. We hope that, when he has time to digest his experience with the C.S.A., Prof. Thompson will give us much more advice, in person and in writing. Meanwhile, *Workshop* is happy to present his

Progress Report

THIS is a personal report. During the past winter, as temporary, part-time member of the C.S.A. staff assigned to "miscellaneous," I have had many contacts and experiences. These stimulate one to think about the general development and problems of Christian social action among our own churches and in other denominations. Some impressions are given here for what they are worth.

1. There is a new atmosphere about social action since the New Haven General Council. Actions there seem to have (a) settled controversies about the C.S.A., at least for the present, and (b) made clear that the Congregational Christian churches want a vigorous program of social ac-

tion, at all levels, local, state, national.

2. The Council for Social Action is sincerely trying to operate according to the letter and the spirit of the New Haven action on the Board of Review Report. Both on the board of the Council and on the staff there are occasional vigorous differences as to the meaning of the Report for specific situations. But these are all in the spirit of seeking a true interpretation of the will of the General Council and not in the spirit of evasion. Specifically: (a) All available energy has been concentrated this year on the development of local program, through training institutes, program materials and visits. (b) The use of funds for social ac-

tion workers in State Conferences, instead of at headquarters, is paying off. These workers are giving attention directly to local organization and program. (c) Without renouncing the authority renewed at New Haven "on occasion [to] intercede directly in specific situations," the C.S.A. has not devoted energy this year to the analysis of specific legislation or statements and pressures in connection with it. The Message on American Foreign Policy (see *Social Action*, February 1955) was addressed to the churches, not the Congress, and mailed to all churches before any public release.

3. It is not too hard to start a program of social action in a local church, but it takes energy to develop and expand the program. This may surprise some. But to make a minimum start, here are a few simple steps: (a) Call together a few people who have shown a vivid sense of social concern. (If there is a church without such people, how can it call itself Christian?) (b) Begin with the problems or projects which are of common concern to these people. These may be local matters: a crossing dangerous to school children, an unwholesome hangout for youth, political corruption, economic threats. Or they may be wider political and social issues with local aspects: segregation, legislative programs, foreign policy. (c) Find handles by which to grasp the real problems. The handles may be: personal con-

tacts with responsible people or groups, organization or use of a community-wide movement, communications with legislators. The real problems are not always the ones in the public eye, and require both study and Christian insight.

Expanding the program involves interesting the indifferent, convincing the sceptical, educating the uninformed, drawing in those outside. That takes work, persistence, faith and hope, and a deeply Christian spirit.

4. There are many possible ways of organizing, depending on the size of the church, its general pattern of work, personnel, community situation. Two general types seem most successful: (a) An interest group made up of those who wish to participate in response to open invitations. Such a group may be unofficial, or a special church organization, or part of another organization in the church. (b) A church committee, parallel with other committees. This committee will try to get a social action emphasis into all program groups, perhaps coordinated so that all study one problem at the same time.

5. There are three necessary elements in a sound social action program. (a) Study — Bible, current problems, Christian ethics—to understand our problem and to see the will of God with reference to it. (b) Worship—including both private and group prayer—so that we make our decisions before God and not just by ourselves. (c) Action — individually

and in coordinated group effort—because it stultifies the soul to see what is right but not do it, and because the world needs the re-

deeming labor of those who do the work of the Father in the affairs of men.

—HUGO W. THOMPSON

Social Action in Connecticut

A visit to one of the monthly meetings of the Connecticut State Social Action Committee is a stimulating experience. Under the alert leadership of Dr. William Bradley, part-time State Conference social action director, and Mrs. Richard L. White, committee chairman, things are really moving ahead.

Dr. Bradley, a faculty member of the Hartford Seminary Foundation, began his social action work in January. He has divided his time between the work of the State Committee and visits to local church groups and associations. The visits to associations and churches, while important, are not unlike that in any other state, *but the work done with the State Committee represents an approach which is unique and perhaps worth the consideration of others.* Dr. Bradley has, at our request, written the following account of organization and plans.

WITH the generous assistance of the Council for Social Action, the Christian Social Action Committee in Connecticut has been gaining strength since January, and is undertaking some experiments which may be worth the attention of other state committees. Even at this early date certain things seem to be clear: (1) The interest in social action is very much alive, and many churches and countless individuals have been anxiously waiting for an opportunity to get

back into stride. (2) The Board of Review Report and the consequent action at New Haven have done much to clear the air and dispel many of the earlier confusions about the purposes and methods of the C.S.A. (3) Laymen and ministers alike will spend a great deal of time and energy on social issues if they are convinced the effort is not trivial or fruitless. (4) A state organization needs the assistance of someone who is at least a part-time worker in the field.

Connecticut is fortunate in being small in size but rich in human resources. The size makes possible easy travel to the state headquarters in Hartford, so that monthly meetings of the Social Action Committee can be held with members coming from every section of the Commonwealth. And the wealth of leadership means that the committee is able to recruit people from every walk of life—men and women who can think for themselves and who command the respect of their fellow citizens. With such resources at its disposal, the committee determined to develop a group and a program worthy of the people whom it sought to enlist for its membership. To this end a program has been de-

veloped which has drawn members to committee meetings with regularity. Meetings are held each month at the Congregational House in Hartford; they begin at 5:00 P.M. and end at 9:00 (for those who wish to leave, but some always stay another hour or so). Business is conducted in the early part of the evening, supper is served there, and then business gives way to a discussion of a particular issue or policy. Experts are invited to lead the group in these discussions: President Flannery of Southern Union College on desegregation, Herman Reissig on Christian principles and foreign affairs, Prof. Kenneth Underwood on the church and social problems. These discussions have proved valuable in raising the sights of the committee; also, they have provided ideas and information for local groups, and they have made the meetings worth the time and travel of busy people from various parts of the state.

In addition to these meetings, however, the committee has worked for long hours on an effort to create a type of organization which will be truly representative of the churches, and to this end has developed a structural plan to be put into effect next fall. The size will be limited to fifty members, fifteen of whom will be the chairmen of social action committees of the associations. The rest of the membership will be drawn from certain categories in such a way that

there will always be representatives of industry, labor, agriculture, business, consumer interests, pastors, the Congregational Women's Fellowship, and the Pilgrim Fellowship. It is hoped that in this way both the local church (through the association delegate) and the individual church member will feel that the Christian Social Action Committee is truly a representative body, speaking to the needs of the people on the one hand, and speaking responsibly to the conscience of the churches, on the other.

The State Committee conceives its role to be twofold: It must study social issues, legislation, and all such matters of policy, and on occasion report its opinions to church members; and it must assist associations and churches in developing program projects of their own. Under the leadership of Mrs. Richard L. White, the state chairman, and Rev. Lawrence Upton, the secretary, the committee is working to achieve both goals, although it will be some time before appreciable results can be attained.

—WILLIAM BRADLEY

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The Social Action Readers

It is generally considered good policy for a publication to undertake occasionally a readership study to discover whom it is serving and how well it is satisfying the customer. *Social Action* undertook just such a study earlier this year. We sought answers to the following questions: What sort of person is the *Social Action* reader? How much education has he had? What is his occupation? How does he use the magazine? What positions of influence does he hold in the church and community? What features of the magazine does he find most helpful?

In January one thousand double post-card questionnaires were mailed to a random sampling of our subscription list. At the time of our compilation of results, 360 completed replies had been received. There was no follow-up of the non-replying readers, and consequently we are unable to judge to what extent hostility or indifference contributed to their failure to reply. The following report is drawn up on the assumption that the 360 replies are representative of the total membership.

The Reader

Our first goal was to classify our readers according to denomination, type of church attended, age, education, and occupation. The result: 61 per cent reported that they were members of the Congregational Christian denomination; 8 per cent, Methodist; 5.7 per cent, Presbyterian, U.S.A.; 5.0 per cent, Evangelical and Reformed; 6.4 per cent failed to list any denominational affiliation, while the remaining 13.9 per cent were scattered over twelve other denominations.

These percentages are similar to those reported by Kenneth Underwood in the readership study of *Social Action* in 1946.

Our readers seem to be fairly well distributed according to the type of church they attend: 38 per cent reported that they were members of a city church; 17 per cent reported suburban church membership; 28 per cent, town or country church; 5 per cent, other types of churches (mostly college or university); 12.5 per cent failed to indicate any type of church. There was undoubtedly some confusion as to how large a town should be in order to be classified a city, or what criteria should be used to distinguish city from suburban. But even allowing for some confusion, the results show a wide distribution.

The age levels of the readers provide grounds for much interesting speculation. The largest single block of readers was found in the 60 and over category (24 per cent); 15.3 per cent were between 50 and 59; 21.4 per cent between 40 and 49; 22 per cent between 30 and 39; 12.8 per cent between 20 and 29. Underwood's study had shown 56 per cent in the range between 41 and 50, and 11.5 per cent below 20 years of age. A comparison of these two sets of figures suggests that the age level of our readers is rising. (On the individual level this is merely an elaboration of the obvious!) The importance of this discovery is, however, that it indicates that *Social Action* is failing to attract a proportionate number of the younger generation. We might speculate that the magazine still appeals largely to "Social Gospellers" of the pre-World War II era.

When we examine the educational level of our readers we begin to see how unrepresentative a group they really are. Note the figures: 64.5 per cent have completed at least one year (most of them three years) of graduate study beyond the A.B. or B.S. degree; an additional 19.5 per cent have attended college; 5 per cent are high school graduates only; 11 per cent failed to answer this question. This high educational level (29 per cent of the denomination as a whole has not completed high school!) is not surprising when one looks at the occupational distribution of the readers, but it shows that *Social Action* is definitely not a magazine appealing to the common man.

An examination of the occupational distribution of the readers confirms the common impression that *Social Action* is a magazine read largely by clergy and educators. The study shows that 46 per cent are in full-time Christian service (either as pastors or church administrators or directors of religious education); 15 per cent are teachers, educational administrators, or students; and 5 per cent belong to other professions; 12.5 per cent classify themselves as housewives; 10 per cent as occupied in business, trade, or white collar jobs; 7.2 per cent failed to respond, while the remaining 4.3

per cent were retired or in other occupations not listed above. Only one person was classified as a farmer. These figures are greatly out of proportion to those for the Congregational Christian denomination as a whole. The denomination has only 19.6 per cent in professional occupations and an equal per cent in agriculture.

Organizational Affiliations of Readers

We felt that a knowledge of the organizational affiliation of our readers might help us to discover their potential influence in the church and community. Since the influence of the clergy within the church was taken for granted, we have not included their church activities in the following tabulations. In addition, 27.8 per cent of the non-ministerial group listed affiliations which did not fall under the categories listed.

These figures suggest that the readers of *Social Action* are not, in general, holding positions of influence and responsibility in the community, though a great many are in positions of importance within the church. Our readers, like all Protestants, are slow to realize that opinions must be harnessed to organized structures if their influence is to be felt in society.

<i>Ministers, Non-church Affiliations</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Service Club (Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.)	23.2
Political Organization	4.6
Labor Union	2.0
Other	9.9
None	65.6

<i>Non-Ministers, Non-Church Affiliations</i>	
Service Club	16.7
Business or Professional Organization	27.8
Political Organization	18.2
Labor Union	3.8
None	38.9

Non-Ministers, Church Affiliations

Trustee or Deacon	17.2
Missions or Benevolence Committee	21.0
Social Action Committee	40.7
Church Club (Men's Club, etc.)	41.0
Church School Teacher or Superintendent	25.8
None	18.7

Ways Social Action Is Used

Our attempt to discover how *Social Action* is used by our readers elicited a wide range of responses which have

been summarized as follows.

From these replies it is apparent that most of our readers find some way in which the material in *Social Action* can be put to use.

	Percentage	
	Ministers	Non-Ministers
Resource for Articles, Sermons, Talks	76.2	38.8
For Personal Information	94.0	90.5
For Personal Information Only	13.2	29.2
In Social Action Committee	24.5	23.0
In Church School	5.3	5.3
In Classes Taught	15.2	12.4
In Church Organizations	15.9	21.5
Other	5.3	13.4

Evaluation of the Magazine

The readers were also given a chance to indicate their reactions to various aspects of the magazine. In response to our question, "What features should be given greater emphasis?" 33.3 per cent favored no change; 22 per cent wanted more editorials; 16.1 per cent, more book reviews; 11.4 per cent, more correspondence from readers; 14.1 per cent, more photographs or drawings. An additional 10 per cent offered a wide variety of comments which cannot be easily classified.

Comments on the "Workshop" section of the magazine were also mostly favorable (86 per cent of those making any comment). Some respondents

were unfamiliar with the section, and 8.9 per cent of those responding had found no use for the section.

General comments on the magazine as a whole ranged from appeals for *Social Action* to "be controversial or die" to demands that the magazine "eliminate its biased editorials." Some of the less dramatic readers stressed the need for more factual information in the form of charts and graphs, while others suggested ways that the magazine might be made more "readable." The Editorial Board is currently weighing all these comments along with the general findings of the survey to determine what changes in policy might be suggested.

—DAVID A. GIBBONS

Worship and Social Action

Recommended Materials

In the sections on the Bible and on hymns some specific illustrations have been cited but the section on prayer omits examples. This calls for another article or, even better, a new book of prayers that lift our social needs and relationships into the presence of God. Such a book, bringing together prayers published here and there and including original compositions, is overdue. A few of the best available books are listed below:

For God and the People—Prayers of the Social Awakening. By Walter Rauschenbusch. Originally published 1909.

The Kingdom, the Power and the Glory. Subtitle: "Services of Praise and Prayer for Occasional Use in the Churches." New York: Oxford University Press. First printing 1933. Good litanies for Daily Bread, Labor, Peace, Fellowship.

The Student Prayer Book. Edited by Haddam House Committee under chairmanship of John Oliver Nelson. New York: Association Press. Its usefulness is not limited to students. Really excellent prayers for the various occupations: agriculture, engineering, journalism, the law, political life, etc. Warmly recommended.

A Book of Prayers. By Samuel McComb. 1912. Out-of-print, which is too bad. Copies may be available here and there. Great prayers, *inter alia*, for the Prosperous, Doctors of Medicine, Teachers, Students. McComb reminds one of Rauschenbusch.

Revolution in a City Parish. By Abbé G. Michonneau. Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1952. A Roman Catholic book. The chapter

on "A Living Apostolic Liturgy" will teach Protestants some things about worship, as well as about Roman Catholic efforts to make worship relevant.

Diary of Private Prayer. By John Baillie. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949.

The Glory of God. Be Still and Know. Prayer and the Common Life. Teach Me to Pray. All by Georgia Harkness, whose prayers and writings about prayer are greatly helping to relate worship to social action. Abingdon.

New Worship and Song. Book of hymns, services of worship and prayers. Pilgrim Press, 1942. Uses, as one item of worship materials, the preamble to the Charter of the Council for Social Action.

Most modern hymnals contain good litanies and prayers related to social situations. They will repay careful examination.

Christianity and Crisis, issue of December 13, 1954, carried a fine litany "for the nation and the community of nations" by Ursula (Mrs. Reinhold) Niebuhr.